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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION - PRESIDENT BUSH'S TRAVEL TO LATIN AMERICA

¶1. On March 8, conservative, independent "La Tercera" (circ. 101,000) carried a column by political scientist Boris Yopo entitled "Bush in Latin America." Quote:

"President Bush's trip to Latin American is related to the global, regional, and domestic problems he is facing globally, regionally, and domestically.... It is an attempt to rebuild ties with a region where the United States has lost significant ground in the past years and where the 'Chavista' expansion and the rise of other anti-U.S. forces bring to the forefront the need to maintain the continent as a strategic defense...as the United States faces several challenges in the exercise of its global power.... The trip is late...but can become the foundation for renewed dialogue in the hemisphere, if and when Bush addresses problems that make difference in the every day life of Latin American societies.... That is what will eventually repair the U.S deteriorated image in the region."

¶2. On March 8, conservative, influential newspaper-of-record "El Mercurio" (circ. 129,000) carried a column by former Chilean diplomat Nelson Haddad, entitled, "The Purpose of his Trip." Quote:

"President Bush's trip...is an effort to reach out to the region and to deliver a signal of political and commercial interest to strengthen existing ties and restore alliances that will help the United States to recover its leading role in the continent.... This trip can help build a new kind of association between the United States and Latin America...through a joint dynamic initiative to promote social development, economic growth, education, innovation, strengthen democracy, and the environment."

¶3. On March 8, conservative, influential newspaper-of-record "El Mercurio" (circ. 129,000) carried a column by international commentator Karin Ebensperger entitled "Presidential Tour: Energy and Influence on Target." Quote:

"(President Bush's trip to Brazil and other countries in the region is of great interest, because it shows a change in attitude.... Overall the political goal of this visit is to strengthen Brazil's role as a regional leader to counter Hugo Chavez' influence.... Although the President is not traveling with an elaborate agenda or a generous wallet...the trip paves the way for a kind of cooperation that has simply not existed during his administration. Let us hope that this returned approach to Latin America is based on a modern type of cooperation ...with no political intervention.... But above all, that it differs as much as possible from the Alliance for Progress...which included strong U.S. military presence and influence, an agrarian reform, and state planning in all areas that...did not benefit the poor or local industries."

KELLY